

Isle of Man Tragedy

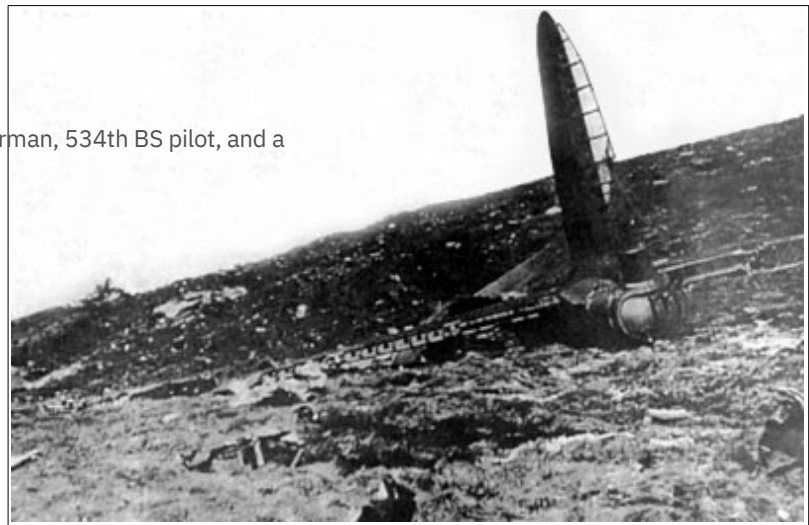
On Monday, April 23, 1945, aerial combat operations had effectively ceased. Allied ground forces were in Berlin when tragedy once more visited the 381st Bombardment Group.

En route Belfast, Ireland, for a much deserved break thirty-one members of the 381st Bombardment Group and its associated commands were killed when their B-17G (#43-38856) slammed into the North Barrule peak on the Isle of Man.



Located in the middle of the Irish Sea between Liverpool and Belfast, the Isle of Man is not part of the United Kingdom.

The North Barrule peak rises to 1,600 feet and is located approximately 4 miles northeast of Snaefell, the highest peak on the isle. Weather that day was reported as clear, but the peaks are often shrouded in clouds. Capt. Charles Ackerman, 534th BS pilot, and a reduced crew consisting of a copilot, navigator, engineer, radio operator, and twenty-six other officers and enlisted men -- several of whom were original members of the group going back to Pyote, Texas -- took off for some much deserved rest and relaxation in Belfast. Approximately ninety minutes later their aircraft was destroyed just a few hundred feet below the two thousand foot peak.



The remains of those killed were recovered and flown back for burial at Cambridge aboard "Little Rockette", the Group's 'hack' which had flown the very first Eighth Air Force heavy bomber mission back on August 17, 1942.

On April 27, 1945, Chaplain Brown conducted the solemn ceremony at the American Military Cemetery, Cambridge. In his book, *The Mighty Men of the 381st: Heroes All*, he quotes one squadron commanding officer as saying "This hit where it hurt most" - and it most certainly did.

A plaque was dedicated at the site in 1995 by the citizens of the Isle of Man.

"On this hillside at 10:25 a.m. on the 23rd April 1945, a flying fortress B17G - 38856 crashed with the loss of 31 American

servicemen. The aircraft belonged to the 381st heavy bombardment group, 533rd squadron based at Ridgewell in Essex and was on a ferry flight to Nutts corner in N. Ireland.

This memorial was erected in memory of those who lost their lives here and in other aircraft accidents in these hills, by Maughold Parish Commissioners and the Manx Aviation Society on 5th August 1995."

Many thanks to Darren Prior of Isle of Man Newspapers Ltd, for contributing information for this piece and the Association's deepest thanks to the Maughold Parish, the Manx Aviation Society, and to all the citizens of the Isle of Man who honor our lost heroes.

Casualty List

Unit	First	M.	Last	Rank	Position
534	Charles E.		Ackerman	Capt	P
534	Earl	G.	Ammerman	Cpl	
533	Edward G.		Bailey	Cpl	
432	Andrew R.		Barbour	Pvt	ASGp
534	John	P.	Fedak	1st Lt	B
881	Thomas P.		Flaherty	Cpl	Chem
532	William E.		Geist	T/Sgt	RO
532	Edward	Z.	Gelman	M/Sgt	Crew Chief
7th	Ralph	L.	Gibbs	S/Sgt	Chap's asst
533	Joseph	L.	Gray	T/Sgt	
535	Herbert C.		Gupton	Cpl	
534	Wesley M.		Hagen	T/Sgt	RO
534	Irwin	R.	Hargraves	Sgt	
534	Wayne	W.	Hart	1st Lt	Gunnery
1207	James	M.	Hinkle	1st Lt	COM
534	Edwin	A.	Hutcherson	Sgt	
534	Michael J.		Kakos	Sgt	
534	David	H.	Lindon	T/Sgt	
532	Wayne	K.	Magee	S/Sgt	
535	Jose	M.	Martinez	Sgt	
535	Alfred	M.	Meta	S/Sgt	BT
534	Martin	M.	Matyas	1st Lt	
534	Leslie	H.	Maxwell	Cpl	
534	Walter	A.	McCullough	Tec 5	
432	Lawrence E.		McGehehey	1st Lt	ASGp
1775	Andrew	(NMI)	Piter		Tec 4
			535 Angelo (NMI)	Quagliariello	Pfc
532	Merle	L.	Ramsowr	Cpl	
533	Joseph	W.	Sullivan	T/Sgt	
432	Harry	(NMI)	Super	Cpl	ASGp
448	Edwin	C.	Ullmann	Sgt	Sdep